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Letters

How Intelligence 'Old Boys' Look at Renegades

To the Editor:

In her Nov. 20 column, Flora Lewis deplores our "helpless reaction to revelations about ex-C.I.A. agents who provide Colonel Qaddafi with fiendish devices." I share her concern but cannot agree with her contention that "scarcely anybody seems upset."

In fact, the Association of Former Intelligence Officers — some 3,000 old intelligence hands representing probably the nearest thing in real life to the mythical "old boy network" — rejects Miss Lewis's guilt-by-association ploy of trying to hold all of us responsible for the sins of a couple of renegades like Edwin Wilson and Frank Terpil.

At our annual convention last month we went on record stating that those who thus abuse their past intelligence connections are "directly supporting a primary objective of hostile intelligence agencies by casting doubt on the integrity and credibility of our intelligence organizations and personnel."

In Congress, the House Select Committee on Intelligence is continuing its investigation of the matter with, it reports, the full cooperation of the C.I.A. And Central Intelligence Director Casey has ordered his legal staff to recommend all possible measures against the offenders.

Miss Lewis goes on to say that we have laws which forbid the naming of

C.I.A. agents but Congress is doing nothing about laws to punish former intelligence personnel who sell their skills for sinister purposes. In fact, we have no laws which forbid the naming



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of intelligence agents. Such laws are under consideration by the Congress, but until Congress acts, the safety and careers of many intelligence personnel are in jeopardy as a result of systematic exposure by domestic organizations publicly committed to crippling our intelligence agencies.

A major organizer and promoter of

this activity, former C.I.A. officer Philip Agee, is now living abroad and is probably beyond the reach of such legislation even if it is passed. Some of the activities of Messrs. Wilson and Terpil, on the other hand, are covered by criminal statutes, on the basis of which both were indicted last year by a Federal grand jury, but they are now living abroad beyond the reach of extradition.

The point is that the Wilson/Terpil case and the Agee case are part and parcel of the same problem: There is no sure way that a free society like ours can monitor and control former public servants to the extent necessary to insure against the misuse and abuse of the information, skills or connections acquired in Government service.

No doubt, additional legislation would be useful, and more diligent screening of applicants and continuingly assessing incumbents might help in weeding out those of dubious integrity. But the fact remains that a free society is often ill-equipped to restrain those who would do it harm. The Wilsons, Terpils and Agees are the price we pay for being what we are.

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President, Association
of Former Intelligence Officers
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